

NICK CUTFORTH: PROFESSIONAL STATEMENT: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The University of Denver's (DU) and the Morgridge College of Education's (MCE) mission statements emphasize the value of partnerships, interdisciplinary efforts, an engaged university, and serving the local region. In 2007, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching classified DU as one of its 76 community engaged institutions. I am fortunate that DU offers an intellectual home for my scholarship and teaching agenda that stresses the application of research to promote civic engagement and reduce social inequalities.

Since receiving tenure and promotion in 2000 I have continued to attempt to put into practice Donald Schon's idea of building bridges between academic "high grounds" and the community "lowlands" to foster change at both sites. I find it difficult to delineate the percentage of time spent on teaching, research/creative activity, administration, and service roles and responsibilities because they are embedded in my engagement in the community and fall under the umbrella of community-engaged scholarship (CES); i.e., a commitment to making scholarly activities relevant and useful to communities, as well as the academy. This focus has allowed me to pursue a wide range of interests including practicing and studying approaches to institutionalizing community engagement (e.g., service-learning and community-based research); investigating topics of importance to community and university partners (e.g., parent engagement programs and urban school reform initiatives), and identifying the role of physical activity programs in youth development (e.g., psycho-social outcomes of extended day programs). By virtue of doing CES, I have developed strong working relationships with community partners (e.g., urban schools, community-based health organizations), interdisciplinary scholars in diverse fields (most notably Don Hellison, Kerry Strand, Sam Marullo, and Randy Stoecker), and my students. In this document, asterisks in journal articles, workshops, and other presentations reflect my collaboration with these individuals, all of whom share the goal of cultivating community-university partnerships to translate knowledge into action, both within the academy and the community. Coauthoring publications and co-presenting with community members/partners have been a particularly effective mode of dissemination.

My collaboration with these "communities of congruence" (Palmer, 2008) has meant that I have used a range of dissemination venues to reach the professional and public audiences with whom I work. These venues include books, book chapters, peer reviewed articles, book reviews, technical reports, conference presentations, workshops, community meetings and lectures, and invited speeches. My scholarship fits into the literatures of service-learning, university-community partnerships, community-engaged scholarship, qualitative research, translational research, physical activity and youth development, urban education, and action research. As of October 21, 2008 my scholarly work has been cited on Google Scholar (96 entries, 335 citations), and the ISI Web of Science (15 times).

SUGGESTIONS FOR READERS OF THIS PORTFOLIO

I would like my portfolio to be reviewed with an understanding of and appreciation for my efforts to embed my disciplinary expertise and personal interests, passions, and identities with needs that exist beyond the campus. My comments below are intended to assist readers in this regard.

First, community-engaged scholarship extends traditional measures of faculty roles in ways that recognize the more relational and labor-intensive nature of community engagement activities, as well as the emphasis on producing knowledge that has immediate value in the broader world. Community-based research (CBR) projects require multiple, ongoing, and open channels of communication and power sharing between professors and community partners, as well as the authentic interchange of ideas, histories, and understandings. These expanded professional roles also involve several challenges that arise from the unpredictable and labor-intensive nature of university-community interfaces. These include listening to the community, understanding and meeting their needs, establishing and maintaining relationships, and managing projects. In the MCE, we are fortunate that our standards for promotion and

tenure afford credibility to community engagement and place value on CBR. In other words, our institutional culture and values in regard to tenure, promotion, and merit criteria are closely aligned with DU's vision of "being a great private university dedicated to the public good." In comparison to other DU schools and colleges, fewer concerns are raised in the MCE about whether faculty can publish the sufficient quantity of work to achieve tenure and promotion while simultaneously participating in the time-intensive community building necessary for conducting-engaged scholarship.

Second, I'd like to draw readers' attention to student evaluations which include views about the value of community-based learning. Numerous undergraduate and graduate students have been involved in CBR and service-learning projects and some have grown in ways they would not otherwise have in a regular classroom. An ethos of community engagement has resulted from these experiences that have enabled these students to realize their own passion for this type of experiential learning and long-term community involvement. On occasions, however, and for a number of reasons, these projects have fallen short in providing students with valuable learning experiences. Thus, I am always pleased when students connect their real-world experiences with academic coursework. When this occurs students develop a broader perspective about the relationship between the issues they read about in books and articles and the lived experiences of community members who deal with those issues on a day-to-day basis.

Third, I'd appreciate readers noting that the capacity of several community partners has been enhanced by CBR projects in tangible ways (e.g., enhanced tools and efficacy) and intangible ways (e.g., the ideas engendered by the projects live on in agency culture). In my scholarship materials I have included a technical report conducted by two students and me for the State's Division of Refugee Services because it is representative of the kind of work that I have been doing in this non-traditional academic arena. Attached to the report are letters from two community partners that describe the impact both of the particular CBR project and their ongoing relationship with DU. These letters illustrate the partners' enhanced capacity for leadership through the acquisition of research tools and knowledge and insights about the effectiveness of their programs. In addition to these tangible changes, the letters point out that the community partners' capacities have been enhanced by shifts in understanding their work and its impact. Interestingly, a coauthored article involving the two students, two community partners, and myself describing the promising practices and shortcomings of the study's methodology will be published in the Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning in spring 2009.

Fourth, I expect that readers will know first-hand that energy, intellect, and ingenuity are required to collaborate with community partners to address important social and economic problems. Since arriving at DU nearly 15 years ago, I have been energized and excited about CBR projects and the opportunities they provide for engaged research and teaching. My success and excitement reinforces the university administration's decision to establish the university's Public Good vision by making it more visible and real. Today I am one of dozens of foot soldiers of the University's Public Good vision statement. Our work positively impacts student learning, promotes and builds stronger relationships between the University and the community, and enhances the institution's reputation and image.

In conclusion, I invite readers of my portfolio to use a lens that supports a more inclusive and diverse view of scholarship, and to regard community-engaged scholarship projects as a type of research scholarship, and not as a part of the lesser "service" category. This view acknowledges the contributions of my engaged scholarship, both to the intellectual life of the university and to the quality of life in the local community. While I believe that traditional peer-reviewed publications should remain a factor in promotion (and tenure) criteria, additional credit should accrue from the extended effort and time required for conducting research that not only results in publications, but also produces positive change for community members and an enhancement of the reputation of the university within the community. My sincere hope is that my portfolio reflects my efforts to continue and deepen engaged scholarship with concomitant benefits for the university and community; and that the MCE will continue to lead DU toward its vision of becoming one of the US's premier engaged campuses.

NICK CUTFORTH: TEACHING

Teaching, student advising, and mentoring are very important to me. I consistently strive to keep my

courses current, interactive, reflective, and challenging, and my teaching evaluations and teaching awards reflect this effort. I have a reputation as a professor who expects high quality work from students and gets it. I am sought out as a dissertation and coursework advisor and students know that I am committed to their learning, their engaged work in the community, and to their development as researchers and writers. My teaching style is open and warm. My classes are usually organized, intellectually stimulating, and informal. I encourage student participation and strive to make learning a pleasant and engaging experience for my students. My class syllabi are comprehensive with clear and challenging assignments. Increasingly I have used technology such as Blackboard and email in my classes and find them to be excellent additions to my teaching.

A substantial amount of my professional work is devoted to providing opportunities and supporting students in community-based learning initiatives and engaged scholarship. Several of my students have presented at national conferences, published in peer review journals, and received awards (see CV for details). This work, together with that of my colleagues, has played an important part in establishing DU as a leader in community-based research (CBR).

Course load at the University of Denver is 6 courses in an academic year. However, the dissertation advising load in the Morgridge College of Education is high, and since 2000, I have sat on over 70 dissertations and theses, 13 of which as chair, 7 as co-chair, and 5 as outside chair.

I teach undergraduate and graduate classes in CBR, urban education, urban youth development, teacher education, and research methods. My teaching is driven by the potential of service-learning and CBR to enhance undergraduate education and graduate training programs and thus contribute to the institutionalization of community engagement in higher education. Community-based research provides students with hands-on, real world, problem-solving experience in the process of a serious, sustained engagement, while simultaneously deepening and expanding classroom learning. They gain a sense of community, a sense of responsibility to others, sensitivity and aspirations to help resolve social problems, a feeling of commitment and obligation to become involved in community affairs, as well as a commitment to broader concerns for society.

Students interested in CBR follow a sequence of course offerings and internships. First, service-learning opportunities familiarize students with community organizations, schools, agencies, and the people they serve. Next students conduct CBR with community partners under my supervision in classes and internships, and eventually become independent researchers on their own CBR projects. Since 2000, I have supervised 22 student CBR projects (including 3 doctoral dissertations) and supported 26 students through grants, contracts, and internal and federal work-study funding. Student projects have included literature reviews, needs assessments, and program evaluations, and community partners consistently comment on how well prepared my students are for this intensive community experience. I have shared lessons learned from this work in publications and local, national, and international lectures, workshops, and presentations. Several of my former doctoral students' careers in universities, state agencies, and foundations involve CBR in some form, and I provide ongoing mentoring to them as they begin to establish their own research agendas.

Since receiving tenure in 2000, I have developed 11 new courses mostly on my own but, in a few cases, with colleagues. These include 3 courses for the Boettcher Teachers Program, 2 courses for the Urban Studies Undergraduate Minor, 2 courses for the Teacher Education Program, and 4 research courses for students in programs across the Morgridge College of Education and in other DU graduate programs. When appropriate in these classes, I try to provide productive civic engagement and civic learning opportunities for students through partnerships with schools, non-profits, and community-based organizations. These learning opportunities promote students' awareness of social inequalities, commitment to social justice, and sense of empowerment to create social change. I have found that the best means of instilling a sense of civic engagement is through service-learning and community-based research and student evaluations have been crucial in enabling me to produce learning outcomes that are typical of experiential and project-based learning (see Stocking & Cutforth, 2006).

Student evaluations have played a positive role in improving the quality of my teaching and student

learning in non-community-based courses as well. Often students' comments are quite rich with observations and insights which help me to refine my courses and teaching practices to provide students with better learning experiences. I reflect deeply on my teaching and strive to continuously make improvements to enhance the learning of my students. For example, student evaluations have led me to provide more clarity in lectures, clearer connections between lectures and readings, and greater structure in class discussions. They have illuminated my strengths as a teacher, as well as areas which need improvement. After receiving evaluations I usually target one or two items for improvement in the next class to be taught so that students learn more effectively and efficiently.

I regularly receive strongly positive ratings and comments from students in my classes. Each year I seek to expand my teaching repertoire by trying new teaching techniques. One of my more successful teaching strategies has been my use of weekly journals and reflection papers which students submit as email attachments. I respond to these within 48 hours, thus providing feedback and corrections necessary, especially for courses that involved service-learning and community-based research opportunities. I have found that this strategy promotes important kinds of communication outside the classroom.

As far as program development is concerned, during 2005-6 I was a member of the planning committee that developed the Boettcher Teacher Program. This work involved meeting with school district and community partners to engage in joint planning of courses and eventually my teaching 3 courses in the program. In addition, I am coordinator of the undergraduate Urban Studies Minor and initiated and co-directed the Center for Community Engagement's Spring Break Urban Immersion Program which involves up to 15 undergraduate and graduate students living in a hostel in Denver and working with homeless and immigrant groups for 5 days (see Media section of CV for a Denver Post article on this program).

Please note: Unsolicited emails and letters regarding my teaching contributions are available upon request.

NICK CUTFORTH: RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

Since receiving tenure and promotion to associate professor in 2000, I have authored or coauthored 2 books, 8 peer-reviewed articles, 1 book section, 1 book review, and 1 guest editorial. I have also given over 40 presentations, workshops, and invited speeches in community and university settings in the US and abroad. Below, I briefly elucidate on two key aspects of my scholarship. Please note that I regard my scholarship as integrally connected to my professional outreach and university service roles.

My scholarship on school and community-based physical activity intervention programs began during my time as an assistant professor and has extended into my post-tenure years. For 7 years, I directed an after school physical activity program in Northwest Denver that focused on cross-age teaching of social and personal responsibility concepts. This work, which strived to be both responsive to and embedded in practice, resulted in several articles and a coauthored book. In 2001, as one of 5 honorable mentions for the Ernest A. Lynton Faculty Award for the Scholarship of Engagement from the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE), my contribution was described in the following way: “Dr. Cutforth is being recognized for his efforts to utilize physical education and recreation as a means of improving youth development and as a bridge between universities and communities” (<http://www.nerche.org/Lynton/past-winners/past-winners.html#H01>).

Since 2006, I have been working with the Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center at the University of Colorado as a qualitative research consultant on school-based evaluation and intervention studies related to physical activity and healthy eating among elementary school students. I am co-investigator in a \$1.6M grant proposal currently under review by the Centers for Disease Control. Two seed grants (total: \$16,995) received from DU’s Public Good Fund and the University of Colorado’s Colorado Translational Science Initiative will result in the development of a partnership aimed at creating an action plan for increasing the quantity and quality of physical education in the San Luis Valley. The findings from this work will likely enhance my competitiveness for a larger grant to the Colorado Health Foundation (or another funder). Interestingly, and most satisfying from a personal perspective, these opportunities are enabling me to return to my roots as a physical educator. Once again, I am spending my time in school gymnasiums while broadening my research activities to rural settings and the field of public health.

My second major area of scholarship is community-based research. As the founder and coordinator of the Colorado Community-Based Research Network (www.ccbnrn.org), I match the technical skills of professors and students with the needs of schools and community organizations. Since 1997, the CCBRN has undertaken over two dozen research projects designed to address and solve challenges emanating from the community (details of CBR projects conducted by students are contained in my CV). These research projects have enhanced the capacity of community organizations by providing solid data to support their cases for grants, public funding, or political debates. The “CCBRN story” – its challenges and accomplishments – has generated numerous publications and presentations to a broad audience both nationally and internationally. For example, my coauthored book on CBR has been adopted by over two-dozen universities as a text for faculty development (e.g., Duke University) and courses (e.g., Notre Dame), and cited in diverse academic disciplines (e.g., family and human sciences, geography, community psychology, nursing and community health, business, higher education) and venues (e.g., Michael Buroway’s 2004 American Sociological Association’s Presidential Address, a 2005 National Neighborhood Commission Report, and a 2007 NERCHE Brief).

My scholarship, teaching, and professional outreach and service have been supported by over \$600,000 of funding (the majority being post-2000) from external sources, including the DeWitt Wallace, Piton, and Bonner Foundations; the Colorado Department of Education; and the Corporation for National Service (brief descriptions of major funding sources are below). As principal investigator of 19 grants since 2000, my responsibilities have included overseeing programs, budgeting, and leveraging the skills of colleagues and students in applied teaching, research, and service initiatives in the community.

NICK CUTFORTH: SERVICE

I view my service (which I prefer to call “Professional Outreach”) as integral to my scholarship and teaching. I have embraced and helped shape the University of Denver’s commitment to being “a great private university dedicated to the public good.” My community engagement efforts, together with those of my colleagues and students, have made the intellectual and programmatic resources of the university more available and more useful to local schools and community organizations. In a broader context, I have shared the lessons learned from my work with institutions of higher education in the United States and abroad.

My service directly aligns with my scholarly and teaching interests in the institutionalization of community engagement in higher education. In the Morgridge College of Education, where community engagement is one of three College goals, I chair the Community Engagement Committee and am leading an initiative (with the chancellor’s and provost’s support) to revise the promotion and tenure policy to embrace community-engaged scholarship.

Please note: Unsolicited emails and letters regarding my professional service and outreach contributions are available upon request.

A. Service to the Program.

I have been active in the development of two programs as a member of the curriculum design team of the Boettcher Teachers Program and as Coordinator of the Urban Studies Undergraduate Minor (www.du.edu/urbanstudies). My efforts to involve Curriculum and Instruction students (as well as students across the college and university) in the community have been broad and varied and are described earlier (Supervision of Student Community-Based Research Projects and Graduate Students Supported through Grants & Contracts). I am actively involved in student recruiting. I also serve as a formal mentor for my colleague, Dr. Cynthia Hazel.

B. Service to the University.

My university-based service has reflected and supplemented my research, teaching, and professional outreach and service interests in the institutionalization of community engagement in higher education. I have worked to shape DU’s definition and practice of public good work and scholarship; have been a key contributor to DU’s continuing development as a national leader in community engagement; and strived to create opportunities for faculty, students, and staff to connect their learning and scholarship to salient community issues and problems. Brief descriptions of my roles are included in the sections below.

My activities have included sustained involvement in administration and program planning activities, and membership in a number of university- and college-wide committees. My experience with community-university partnerships has informed several of the university’s public good initiatives, beginning with the original task force in 2002 and continuing today with the Faculty Service Learning Committee. My familiarity with community engaged scholarship has contributed to my leadership of the Morgridge College of Education’s Community Engagement Committee and in the rewriting of the college’s promotion and tenure guidelines. In several university arenas I have contributed to a collaborative and collegial environment. I have helped build networks of expertise on the DU campus, and provided professional development for faculty colleagues through workshops and mentoring.

C. Service to the Profession.

My leadership in community engagement, service-learning, and community-based research has been recognized nationally and internationally through my service on review boards (including National Institutes for Health-NIH), participation in strategic initiatives (including the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education-FIPSE), and provision of technical assistance to universities on the institutionalization of community engagement, as well as training and mentoring for professors in community-engaged scholarship. I have relished these opportunities to shape the direction of community

engagement in higher education with colleagues around the nation and in the UK.

D. Service to the Community.

In Denver I have cultivated, strengthened, and nurtured several university-community partnerships, and been active on numerous committees and advisory boards. The Colorado Community Based Research Network (www.ccbnrn.org), which I founded, serves as the vehicle for leadership and support of the students, faculty colleagues, and key community partners in CBR projects that address several interrelating areas, including urban education, youth development, and community development.

E. Program Administration.

I am course leader of the undergraduate Urban Studies Minor (www.du.edu/urbanstudies), which I initiated in 2002. This minor is based on the premise that undergraduate students' understanding of the different facets of cities is enhanced when they are directly engaged with the issues they are studying through service learning opportunities. (Several testimonials from former students are contained at the urban studies website, www.du.edu/urbanstudies/formerstudents.html.)